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SUBJ: THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE - CARTER'S NUCLEAR
TEST IN JAPAN

1. THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN MONDAY'S NEW YORK TIMES. BEGIN QUOTE. CARTER'S NUCLEAR TEST IN JAPAN. PRESIDENT CARTER MUST SOON MAKE A DECISION THAT WILL REVEAL WHETHER THERE IS SUBSTANCE OR ONLY BLUSTER IN HIS EFFORTS TO RESTRICT THE SPREAD OF DANGEROUS NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES. JAPAN SEEKS PERMISSION TO "REPROCESS" NUCLEAR FUEL SUPPLIED BY THE UNITED STATES IN A PILOT PLANT AT TOKAI MURA, NORTH-EAST OF TOKYO. MR. CARTER HAS RIGHTLY TRIED TO MINIMIZE SUCH REPROCESSING BECAUSE IT TYPICALLY PRODUCES PLUTONIUM, WHICH CAN BE USED AS FUEL IN NUCLEAR REACTORS--OR AS THE EXPLOSIVE FORCE IN NUCLEAR BOMBS. NO RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN OFFICIAL BELIEVES THE JAPANESE INTEND TO MAKE BOMBS; THEY COULD HAVE DONE SO LONG AGO HAD THEY DESIRED. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE TO THE JAPANESE REQUEST COULD DETERMINE WHETHER MR. CARTER'S GENERAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST PRO-
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LIFERATION WILL SUCCEED OR FAIL.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN DISTURBING HINTS THAT THE AMERICAN RESOLVE IS SOFTENING UNDER A BARRAGE OF COMPLAINTS FROM JAPAN. SOME OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE ADMINISTRATION HAS GIVEN UP HOPE OF BLOCKING THE TOKAI MURA PLANT AND IS SEEKING A FALLBACK FORMULA TO ALLOW REPROCESSING UNDER RESTRICTING

CONDITIONS. WE URGE MR. CARTER TO STAND FIRM. A DECISION TO LET JAPAN PROCEED WOULD MAKE IT ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE OTHERS TO FOREGO REPROCESSING.

3. JAPAN'S DESIRE TO PUSH AHEAD WITH REPROCESSING IS UNDERSTANDABLE BUT CHALLENGEABLE. THE COUNTRY HAS FEW ENERGY RESOURCES AND MUST IMPORT THE BULK OF ITS NUCLEAR AND FOSSIL FUELS. THE JAPANESE BELIEVE THAT REPROCESSING WOULD LET THEM EXTRACT ADDITIONAL ENERGY, ECONOMICALLY, FROM THE FUEL RODS USED IN THE PRESENT GENERATION OF NUCLEAR REACTORS. THAT ESTIMATE IS CONSIDERED TOO SANGUINE BY AMERICAN EXPERTS. THE JAPANESE ALSO SEE REPROCESSING AS A SOURCE OF PLUTONIUM FUEL FOR THE BREEDER REACTORS OF THE FUTURE. BUT THE DAY OF THE BREEDER IS FAR OFF, AND PLUTONIUM FOR EXPERIMENTAL BREEDERS COULD BE OBTAINED ELSEWHERE. JAPAN'S FURTHER BELIEF THAT REPROCESSING WOULD REDUCE THE PROBLEMS OF NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL IS DISPUTED BY AMERICAN EXPERTS. AND ALTHOUGH JAPAN RIGHTLY FEARS THE LOSS OF TECHNOLOGICAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCE, THE DISADVANTAGE WOULD PRESUMABLY DIMINISH IF ALL NATIONS RESTRAIN THEIR REPROCESSING.

4. TOKAI MURA HAS BECOME A HOT POLITICAL ISSUE IN JAPAN-- A TEST OF WHETHER THE JAPANESE WILL LET THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION DICTATE THEIR ENERGY FUTURE. MR. CARTER'S POSITION IS WEAKENED BY THE FACT THAT FOR MANY YEARS THE UNITED

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STATES ADVOCATED REPROCESSING AND THE USE OF PLUTONIUM. THE TOKAI MURA PLANT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BUILT WITHOUT AT LEAST TACIT AMERICAN APPROVAL. NOW THAT WASHINGTON HAS BELATEDLY RECOGNIZED THE PROLIFERATION DANGER, IT IS ASKING TOKYO TO REVERSE DIRECTION AS WELL. UNDERSTANDABLY, THE JAPANESE DEMUR.

5. IS THERE A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE? THE ADMINISTRATION SEEMS BENT ON FINDING TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE REPROCESSING LESS VULNERABLE TO MISUSE. ONE OPTION WOULD BE TO ALLOW COPROCESSING, A PROCEDURE THAT LEAVES THE FEARED PLUTONIUM IN A MIXTURE WITH URANIUM AND POSSIBLY OTHER SUBSTANCES. THAT WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT-- THOUGH BY NO MEANS IMPOSSIBLE--TO EXTRACT THE PLUTONIUM AND MAKE A BOMB. BUT COPROCESSING SHOULD NOT BE ENSHRINED AS AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE UNTIL OTHER, POTENTIALLY SAFER, METHODS HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATED.

6. AT THE ADMINISTRATION'S BEHEST, AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY HAS BEGUN TO EXPLORE WAYS OF INSURING THAT NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES AND FUELS ARE NOT MISUSED TO MAKE WEAPONS. REPROCESSING AT TOKAI MURA SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL THAT STUDY IS

COMPLETED IN TWO YEARS. HOW IRONIC, AND SAD, IF THE ONLY
NATION EVER TO SUFFER THE HORRORS OF THE BOMB, AND THE
MOST VOCIFEROUS IN PROCLAIMING ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS "ALLER-
GY" SHOULD SET A PRECEDENT THAT FURTHER SPREADS THE NUCLEAR
CONTAGION. END QUOTE. VANCE

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